

The Misadventures of Lucas Wolenczak

by Karel

Category: SeaQuest

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-05-12 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-05-12 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 17:41:15

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,583

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Lucas is carjacked and stranded, alone, in an unknown city.

The Misadventures of Lucas Wolenczak

>

>

>

>

The Misadventures of Lucas Wolenczak

>

****takes place after the episode Brothers and Sisters.
>

There was knock on the door, and Lucas Wolenczak came strolling in.
"What time are we pulling into port. I need to let my friends know
when to come and get me."

>

Taking off his glasses, Nathan Bridger looked up from his paperwork.
"I said you were grounded."

>

The face in front of him was filled with shock and disbelief. "I
thought you were kidding! I have a ticket for the John Eddie concert!
You've known that for a month and you said I could go," he protested.

>

"Look, Lucas. Even if you are a civilian, you still need to obey the
rules aboard this boat. Do you realize how dangerous it was for you
to take that shuttle? Not only did you put your own life at risk, but
that girl's, and the kid still at the station. Some of the crew might
have been in danger if they had to rescue you. If you're going to

stay on seaQuest, I have to know that you won't try something like this again. Maybe a little discipline will help you remember next time." With that, Bridger put his glasses on again and dropped his head to scrutinize his paperwork again, indicating that the chat was over.

>

Lucas stood there for a minute and then whirled around, hurrying out of the room. Bridger looked up again after the teen had left. That had been difficult, very difficult, knowing the kid had been excited about getting off the boat and going out with friends his own age. He hated to be the one to take that away from Lucas but he had to come down hard on this issue.

>

Lucas ran into his cabin and swung the door as hard as he could, satisfied at the loud clank that vibrated through the room. It just wasn't fair! Even his own parents had never had the balls to ground him. He groaned at that thought. How do you ground someone on a submarine, anyway? Bridger had found the answer - take away the one thing he really wanted, was spending nights dreaming about. And Bridger knew how excited he was about the concert! He has spent enough nights babbling to Ben, the Captain, Kristin and who ever else would listen about it. After dropping Cleo and the other kids off at the UEO hospital, they had traveled down the coast to the UEO main dock yard for a few minor repairs and restocking.

>

"Lucas? There's a call coming in for you. Shall I send it down to your cabin?" Tim O'Neill's calm voice called to him from the vidlink.

>

Must be Kyle, he thought to himself. Flicking the button, he answered, "Thanks Tim." He waited a moment, until the smiling face of his friend, Kyle had appeared on the screen. "Hey, Kyle. Bad news, I can't go now."

>

Kyle's expression faded into a frown. "I thought you said it was all set. Did he find out that there's no adult going with us?

>

"No, he still thinks your brother is going. I, um, did something stupid and....he won't let me leave the boat," Lucas said grumpily.

>

Bryan's face joined Kyle's on the screen. "Hey, Lucas, too bad, man! Can we still stop by and see you. We have some things for you and, um, Samantha baked some cookies for you. Would your Captain object to that?" Kyle gave Bryan a confused look but when he opened his mouth, Bryan gave him a quick shove, knocking him out of the picture.

>

"Hang on, let me check." Flipping on his PAL, he called the bridge. "Patch me through to the Captain, please." Waiting, he tried to restrain his anger and act contrite.

>

After a few seconds, the Captain's cool voice asked, "Yes, Lucas?"

>

"My friends have some things for me. Could they stop by the boat later and drop them off. I won't be able to see them until the next leave. Please?"

>

After a pause, Bridger replied, "I guess that would be alright. We'll be docked about seven. If they'd like, I'll give them a short tour of the seaQuest." Bridger glanced over to Kristin, who was nodding her head vigorously. Bridger shrugged his shoulders helplessly at her. He was a normal teenager living in unusual circumstances. It wouldn't hurt to bend the rules a touch.

>

Relieved, Lucas tried to sound grateful as he said, "Thank you," and then he flicked the PAL off. Turning back to the vidlink, he told the others, " You can come to the dock around seven. I'll meet you outside and the Captain even said he'll give you a tour." After saying goodbye, he plopped down on his bunk, a little cheerier. At least he'd get to see Samantha, even if he couldn't go to the concert with her. It was enough just to let her know he was still alive and interested in her.

>

>

Lucas had been waiting on the dock for fifteen minutes when a car finally pulled up and Bryan, Kyle and Samantha got out.

>

"I thought you forgot about me!" Lucas said jokingly.

>

Samantha ran up to give him a hug. "And miss a chance to get a look at the flagship of the UEO? Not a chance."

>

: "Had a little trouble with security. Apparently, they don't like teens wandering around by themselves," Bryan complained bitterly.

>

"Bridger put your names on the visitor list and told them to call if there were problems!"

>

"Guess it wasn't enough." Kyle grinned. "Anyway, it's over and we're here! He opened the bag he was carrying. "Here's the stuff : some pictures from the time we were at the beach, that new cd you wanted, a couple of books we thought you'd like and the cookies Samantha made." As Lucas took the pile, Kyle added, "You better try the cookies right away and tell Sam how delicious they are. That's all she worried about all day."

>

Lucas opened the tin and peered inside. "Yum! The food is pretty good on the boat but fresh baked chocolate chips are a treat." He shoved one in his mouth, chomping away. "Wow. These are great. Do you guys want some?" Picking up another one, he took a big bite.
>

Exchanging looks, Kyle waved away the tin, "Nah, we so much raw dough when she was making them, I can't even stand the smell of them."

>

Dropping to sit on the ground, Lucas put the pile down and stretched noisily. "You don't realize how much you need sunshine and fresh air until you're at the bottom of the ocean for a month. IF it's alright with you, we can wait here until Bridger comes to take us on the tour."

>

Bryan and Samantha sat down next to him while Kyle still stood.
"What's Bridger like?" Sam asked.

>

"Usually, he an ok guy. It's hard, because he's the Captain, he has to be tough and make sure everyone obeys the rules. Like today." Lucas stopped to examine the seaQuest, reflecting on the Captain's words from earlier today. It may have been wrong to take the shuttle but he had done it to help Cleo. Thinking back to Cleo's face when she had come to him, he decided he deserved to be grounded but if he had to do it again, he would.

>

Reaching to take another cookie, he froze and slowly crumpled to the ground.

>

Kyle and Bryan quickly grabbed Lucas under his arm pits and hauled him up. "Sam, get the car door." Kyle grunted under the dead weight and they dragged Lucas to the car and shoved him in the back seat.

>

"Guys, I don't think this is a good idea," Samantha protested.
"Bridger going to be really pissed at him and Lucas may not be too happy with us either."
>

"The Captain will get over it. The kid spends months on end on the tub at the bottom of the ocean, being dragged around by the military. He needs to get out, have a little fun." Bryan slammed the door shut, glanced around quickly, and slid into the driver's seat. " We'll call the seaQuest from the concert and bring him back as soon as it's over. What can they do - keel haul him? They need his skills too much to do anything drastic." He popped a John Eddie CD in and gunned the motor.

>

With the roar of the engine, they pulled away.

>

>

>

A half hour later, the groan from the back seat let the front seat know that Lucas had awoken. "Oooooh." Lucas shook and twisted his arms and legs, trying to get feeling back into them. He sat up slowly, rolling his head to loosen his neck and shoulders. "Hey, guys. Did I have a good time drinking, 'cause I don't remember it." His eyes widened. "Wait a minute! What's going on?" He studied the changing scenery. "I'm suppose to be on the seaQuest; I'm grounded." He looked at the others suspiciously. "What the hell is going on?"

>

Sam glanced at the other two, a little nervous about what had once sounded like a brilliant plan. Now she wasn't so sure. "Bryan thought you need a break, and we know that you really wanted to go to this concert. We used a new form of Chloral Hydrate in the cookies. It's a fast acting sedative, lasts only about thirty minutes and has virtually no side effects. A lot of pediatricians have been using it on kids undergoing minor surgery and stuff. Neat, huh?"

>

Lucas buried his face in his hands. "Bridger is going to KILL me! How could you do this!" he shouted at them.

>

"Relax," Kyle said soothingly. "We'll take you back after the concert and explain everything. What can he do to us? Yell a little, and then we can leave."

>

"But I've got to live with him. He has the ability to make my life a living hell," Lucas protested. "Have you ever had to scrub out a fish locker? The stench is enough to curl your chest hair, well, that's if I HAD chest hair!" He laid back down on the seat, wondering what shade of purple Bridger's face would turn. And then there was the five hour lecture from Kristin.

>

"Hey, Wolenczak." Bryan's eyes met Lucas' in the rear view mirror. "We're almost there, so you might as well enjoy yourself. That way, you'll have something daydream about during your punishment." Pulling into the parking lot of a convenience store, he stopped the engine and opened the door. "I'm going to get some candy for the show. Anybody else coming in?"

>

Sam and Kyle scrambled out of the front seat but Lucas just waved from his prone position. "Pick me up a bottle of water, would you? And see if they've got any pain reliever. I've got a killer headache." He closed his eyes, so that the car would stop spinning. Apparently, the drug did have a few side effects.

>

Minutes passed quietly, then the front door opened again, some one got in and the engine started. As the car back up and pulled out the parking spot, Lucas sat up. "Did you get my water." He looked at the middle aged man, who sat alone in the front seat, steering the car into the street. "Who the HELL are you?"

>

>

>

>

>

>

The dark haired, slightly balding middle aged man looked in the rearview mirror at the teenager. "Crap. Why does this always happen to me? Sit back, kid, be nice and everything will be ok."

>

The car slowed and the front passenger opened, and a tall thin man quickly jumped into the seat. He took one look at Lucas and said, "I see you did it again, huh, Ralphie?"

>

Ralph snorted. "I'm just so into my work, Carl, focused on the car that I block everything out. He looks like a smart kid, though, and won't give us any trouble. I'm sure he'd like to see his friends again. Some day soon."

>

Lucas decided that keeping his mouth shut was probably the best course of action. If he was lucky, they'd stop the car and let him get out. Of course, the way his luck was running these days, well, it was best not to think about it. He felt like he was caught between a rock and a hard place; car jackers or Bridger's wrath. Which was worse, he asked himself.

>

Carl whipped a map out of his pocket. "Ok, turn here, and then we drive 5 miles and take exit 46."

>

It didn't look like he would be getting out anytime soon. "Could you, maybe, stop and let me out?" he asked tentatively.

>

Carl glanced at Ralph. "Nah, I think you'll go on a little ride with us. We don't want you running to the cops before we have a chance to finish our business transaction."

>

"Let me out here - there's nothing around, no one I can go to. It's a couple of miles to the nearest town," Lucas pleaded with the men.

>

"Sit tight, kid, and you'll be released later. We're car dealers, not murderers, but nothing is going to stop me from the money that's waiting for me. Then we'll all go our merry ways."

>

Crap. Bridger was really going to kill him now. Lucas stared out the window, watching the lights of Pearl Harbor recede behind him. Never being outside of Pearl Harbor, he had no idea what was beyond the city. A touch of panic starting creeping into his thoughts. Kidnaped by his friends, then car jacked and now trapped in a moving car with strangers headed who knows where. It was not something he had planned

when he woke up that morning.

>

Perhaps he should try to escape. He could open the car door and throw himself out. Didn't he read some where about rolling when you hit the ground. Maybe none of his body parts would be damaged permanently. Looking down as the black pavement rolled swiftly by, he rejected this idea quickly. If he said he had to go to the bathroom, maybe they would stop and he could run off into the forest. Yeah, right, genius, then you could use your shoe phone to call the boat. Deciding to adopt a way and see attitude, he let his head drop back against the seat, closing his tired eyes and trying to relax.

>

>

Finally, the car stopped and the two men in the front seat got out. Lucas pretended to be asleep, but cracked his eyelids enough so he could see the meeting going on outside. They had parked in front of a garage, and two men, one black, one white, came out to talk with Ralph and Carl. The black man gave Carl a large pile of money, which he counted and then handed some to Ralph. Laughter ensued, and then they all shook hands, after which the two guys went back into the garage. As Carl and Ralph walked back to the car, the garage door slowly started to rise.

>

The car door opened, and Carl slipped into the driver's seat. "Get out, kid." The engine started as Lucas hustled out the door, and the car pulled forward into the garage. Carl came out the side door. Reaching out to shake hands with Ralph, Carl said, "Great to work with you again, Ralph. See you around."

>

"Goodbye, Carl. Try to stay out of trouble." Ralph walked down the street, and then disappeared around the corner.

>

Carl started to move away. "Uh, what am I suppose to do?" Lucas asked hesitantly.

>

"What ever you want to do," Carl laughed as he too rounded a corner without looking back.

>

Lucas scanned the surrounding area, taking in the compact brick row houses which sat closely together in the small neighbor hood. There were a few people scurrying around, children riding by on their bikes, lights shining brightly in the windows. Pulling his flannel shirt tighter around him, he was aware of the chill of loneliness that passed through him. To his dismay, he suddenly realized that he had neither money or ID on him. Summoning up a bit of courage, he decided that he should look for a police station or police officer and set off down the street.

>

>

>

Legs tired from walking, Lucas sat down on fire escape stairs to rest a bit. He hadn't found a police station or a police officer. Two kids walked by with ice cream cones, and his stomach growled at the thought of food. He hadn't eaten since lunch and even the thought of seaQuest food made his mouth water. Actually, everything about seaQuest was appealing , which was probably good, because if Bridger didn't actually throw him off the boat for good, he wouldn't be allowed off the boat for months to come. He wasn't sure which one he preferred. That look that Bridger usually gave him when he screwed up, that sad, disappointed combination frown, made his skin crawl. Maybe it would be best for all concerned if he did leave the seaQuest but he wasn't sure where he would go.

>

Leaning back, he closed his eyes for a few minutes, trying to figure out what he should do next. Maybe he could just knock on a door and ask to use their vidphone and call seaQuest. Sitting up, he was surprised to find three teens standing in front of him, staring at him.

>

"Hey, kid, that's our step."

>

The young men looked slightly older than he was, smoking and holding bottles wrapped in brown paper bags.

>

One, blonde and wearing a dirty white t shirt, blew smoke in his face. "We don't like strangers on our street. Hey, Kip, remember the last time a stranger came wandering around here?"

>

Kip, tall and thin, snickered. "Yeah, I never did get the blood out of my shirt after that one."

>

Lucas slowly rose, and side stepped past the teens. "Uh, sorry, I got lost and um, I was...." he stuttered, casually trying to angle himself into a position where he could run.

>

The third member of the group, dark skinned, slightly over weight, grabbed Lucas by the sleeve and swung him around till he hit the brick wall, face first. Blood spurted from his nose, as the skin on his cheek scraped over the ragged surface.

>

:Lucas whirled around, clutching his nose with one hand, while attempting to set his body in a defensive stance in case they came after him again. The others stood back, waiting for him to make the first move. Faking to the right as if to escape, he ducked left under their arms as they closed in on him. Running as fast as he could, he heard them yelling at him but did not hear any running behind him so he risked a look back over his shoulder. There was no one chasing him, so he slowed down a little but kept running.

>

Finally, exhausted, he had to rest and dropped behind some trash cans. Tilting his head back, he sniffed several times, trying to get

the blood to stop flowing from his nose. His cheek was raw where the skin had been torn and his breathing was ragged as he gulped for air. Could this day get any worse, he asked himself. Using his arm as a pillow, he laid on the hard concrete as his tired body gave in to the need for sleep.

>

A short while later, Lucas jerked upright as angry voices filled the alley way where he was hidden. Yawning, he blinked several times as he peeked out from behind the trash cans. He couldn't believe his eyes. A police officer was involved in a heated argument with a young woman. Scrambling out of his hiding place, he yelled "Sir, sir!" as the police officer started walking off.

>

The police officer turned at the sound of his voice and looked him up and down. "I don't handle street fights, kid. Go on home to your mother," the officer told him gruffly and then started walking away again."

>

"You have to help me! I was with some friends and our car was stolen while I was still in it. They dumped me and I don't even know what city this is." Lucas fought to keep his voice calm; getting hysterical was not going to help.

>

"Where do you belong, then, kid?" The officer asked him suspiciously.

>

A wave of relief washed over the teen. Maybe there was a light at the end of the tunnel. "I'm a member of the seaQuest crew. Can you contact them and have some one come get me?"

>

"The UEO flagship!" The officer bit back a laugh as his eyes raked over the young, bloody face, and dirty, over sized clothes. "Yeah, right, and I'm the admiral of the fleet. Go on home, kid, and stop telling lies. If you need a place to sleep, there's a shelter over on Monroe Street where you get a shower and a hot meal too." The officer whirled around and marched down the street without a look backwards.

>

Dejected, Lucas didn't even try to stop the man. There was only one thing left. Since he wasn't sure where he was, hitchhiking back to Pearl Harbor seemed like his last option. If he was really lucky, he'd find a ride straight to UEO headquarters and Noyce would be able to help him. Having a peace maker on his side when he faced Bridger seemed a good idea. Maybe the Captain would stop screaming for a minute to listen.

>

The sun was beginning to rise as Lucas stopped to look at the sign that said Highway 45, Pearl Harbor. The arrow pointed straight ahead, down a busy road. Deciding it was as good a place to start as any, he stuck his thumb out and started walking backwards down the road. The cars roared by him, with no one even slowing down. The city was waking up and there were more and more people appearing on the

street, hustling to work. Passing a small grocery store, he noticed the baskets and crates of fruits and vegetables sitting outside. Casually, he walked by, grabbing two apples, letting his overly long shirt sleeve dropped down to cover up his hand and the apples.

Picking up his pace, he walked quickly, weaving in and out of the crowd, trying to disappear in case anyone was chasing him.

>

After several blocks, he sighed in relief and gobbled down the apples, taking huge bites and savoring the sweet flavor. It wasn't enough to eliminate his hunger but it took the edge off the ache. Now if he could do something for his thirst.

>

Walking past a line neat, brick row houses, he became aware of the smokey smell. Taking a few more steps, he saw flames eating away at the roof of one of the houses. A door flew open as woman holding a baby stumbled out as smoke started to billow around her.

>

"Fire, Fire! Please, some one help, my daughter is still inside!" The woman screamed at the top of her lungs before she started coughing again as the baby wailed.

>

Lucas looked left and right. Raising his head, he scanned the windows of the house. A tiny face appeared, nose pressed against the glass. The teen looked left and right again, but it seemed that no one was going to help. Crap.

>

Plunging forward to run up the steps and through the door of the burning house, he tried to blank his thoughts so he wouldn't second guess himself. The thick smoked choked him and he drop to the floor, crawling quickly on all fours. It was hard to see but he found a set of stairs and hurried up them. There were no flames visible yet and he hoped he could find the kid and get out before the fire consumed the lower levels.

>

Coughing, as the acid smoke stung his eyes, the teen tried to keep low as he ran down the hall, searching rooms. Finally, he found the child laying in a heap by the window in a small bedroom. The curtains were smoking and the bedspread was on fire. The room gases were on the verge of super heating and starting to ignite due to the high temperatures. If he didn't hurry, neither of them would make it out of the house, alive.

>

Scooping up the child, and peeking out carefully, Lucas was relieved to see that the fire hadn't reached the hall or the stairs yet. Better hurry, he told himself. As he started running towards the stairs...

>

Boom!

>

The explosion sent him stumbling and he tried to regain his balance. The bedroom he had just emerged from was totally engulfed in flames, which was quickly spreading into the hallway and to the other rooms on the second floor.

>

Terrified, he clutched the child closer to him as he bounced down the steps in huge leaps, skipping steps. On the first floor, the fire raged out control in one corner of the room as Lucas tried to dodge flying embers and burning debris. There was the sound of breaking glass as water began to spray into the windows. Ducking his head, he looked like a full backer running down field as he maneuvered left and right to the front door. Gloved hands grabbed at him, ripping the child from his arms. He started to protest when firefighters slapped at his leg. Oh, god! His pants leg was on fire!

>

Suddenly finding it hard to breath, he collapsed to the ground, as a heavy blanket was thrown over his legs, smothering the flames. Feeling faint as his adrenaline level dropped, he was only partially aware of some one placing an oxygen mask on his face. As he started drifting into unconsciousness, he mumbled, "Call Captain Bridger. He's on... seaQuest ...Pearl Harbor. Tell him... I'm sorry." With that, he let the darkness take him.

>

>

When Lucas opened his eyes, he was surprised to find a set of hazel eyes only five inches from his face. "Captain?" he whispered groggily.

>

"So you are awake." The Captain drew back and smiled happily at him. "You were restless but the doctor said you were dreaming, again."

>

The teen yawned loudly, stretching carefully, and glanced around at what looked like a hospital room. The past 24 hours came flooding back to him. He glanced back up to the smiling face of the Captain. Oh, shit. Maybe if he suddenly went limp, he could pretend he was unconscious again. Bridger wouldn't chew out a helpless, catatonic patient, could he? There had to be some hospital rule about that.

>

Lucas turned his head to look at the wall. His leg ached, his head ached, his whole body was sore.

What to say to the Captain? I'm sorry I ran off. It's not what it looks like. Please don't throw me off the boat. His throat started to tightened up as he thought about having to leave seaQuest. For all the griping he did about it, he loved living there, among people who had become his friends. Blinking rapidly, he sniffed, trying to stop the tears.

>

"Your friends called to tell me what happened." Bridger's gentle

voice broke through the teen's bout of self pity. "They saw the fire on the news, and were extremely apologetic that they hadn't called earlier." He touched the teen lightly on the shoulder, which made the teen turn back in his direction. "And a police office came by to see how you were. Something about how he was sorry that he was rude to you, and he was sorry that he hadn't believed you." he added in a puzzled tone.

>

"I went to him for help and he didn't believe that a scruffy teenager could be a part of the finest crew in the UEO," Lucas explained. "Who is coming, my Mom or Dad, and should I make a list of things I need from the boat or will I be allowed back to get my stuff?" he asked, dreading the inevitable.

>

"Pardon? I don't understand..." Bridger stared at him, confused.

>

:Miserable, the teen fixed his eyes on the wall again. "I know you're going to toss me off the boat. Will I get a chance to say goodbye to Darwin, at least?"

>

Deciding that Lucas would not appreciate laughter, Bridger settled for a small chuckle. He reached over to grab the teen's hand and Lucas started with surprise at the intimate gesture. "The UEO would have my head if I threw off the hero of the day." Reaching with his other hand, he handed the boy the front page of the Honolulu Times. Plastered across the middle was a picture of Lucas, carrying the little girl, emerging from the burning building as the fire fighters moved in on them. "I'm not responsible for Kristin's behavior, however. I would imagine that she'll be your shadow for the next month or so. She's not happy with me for grounding you in the first place and blames me for the whole situation!" Bridger shook his head at the memory of the tongue lashing he had received from the feisty Doctor. "Do you want to tell me about your adventure?"

>

Relaxing back into the bed, the teen was filled with joy and relief. Everything was going to be all right. "More like my misadventures." Telling the Captain about the car jacking, being abandoned on the street of an unknown town, about his encounter with the bullies in the alley, how he stole the fruit, sleeping behind the garbage cans and the cop who told him to take a hike, he ended with the fire. Finally, his energy spent, he laid back exhausted as the Captain looked at him worriedly, hand still wrapped around his.

>

At a loss for words, the Captain stayed quiet for awhile, trying to imagine how the kid had felt, alone, with no one to turn to for help. "Why didn't you find a phone and call us? We could have sent people out looking for you, even if you didn't know where you were."

>

"Truthfully, Sir, I figured I was in such deep water for leaving the boat, that you wouldn't want to take the time to look for me. My parents never took the time to listen to me, to let me explain. They

always took it for granted that I had screwed up again and just went straight to the punishment." Lucas shrugged. "My only plan was to try and get back to Pearl Harbor to talk to Noyce and let him decide what to do."

>

Sadness filled Bridger as he listened to the teen. Did the kid have so little faith in their relationship, in him, even after all this time? Was he so used to being abandoned that he just assumed that it would happen again? "Oh, kiddo. I thought we had gotten past all that. Don't you realize how scared I was, when we had no idea where you were? Then, when we received the call that you had been in a fire and I'd better come to the hospital quickly, I thought I had lost you." He gave the teen a little shake. "Don't do that to me again! You can always call me, come to me and talk about anything."

>

Lucas sat up in bed, a little shaken by this display of emotions from the Captain. No one had ever said these things before, not even his parents. Awkwardly, he patted the Captain's arm. "It's ok. I forgive you for grounding me." He smiled at that, wondering where that thought had come from.

>

Trying to stay on track with the changing conversation, Bridger commented, "Maybe I'll need to think about a different form of discipline, since that one didn't work so well. How well do you handle a toothbrush," he asked mischievously.

>

Lucas decided he definitely did not like the gleam in the Captain's eye. "But I'm a hero! I'll probably get a medal. You can't punish heroes, can you?"

>

This time, Bridger laughed out loud, and gave the boy a warm hug as Ford marched into the room, followed by Kristin, Ben, and Tim.

>

Later, as everyone was scattered around the hospital room, talking, eating, watching tv, and in Ben's case, trying to pick up nurses, Lucas let himself drift off into a contented sleep. He was warm, comfortable with a full stomach of food and soon he would be going home with his friends. What more could he ask for.

>

>

>

>

>

>

>

>

End
file.